

RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH I. 18.

EDITED BY REV. R. CARRIQUE—PUBLISHED BY AN ASSOCIATION OF GENTLEMEN.

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[NO. 1.]

Extract from Sir George Savile's Speech on a petition for relief in the matter of subscription, 1772.

"Some gentlemen seem to apprehend that we are to make the doors of the church as narrow, and to exclude as many as possible. I think we should make them as wide as we can, to take in as many as possible. Others are apprehensive that, in case the Scriptures are substituted in room of the Articles, it will be the means of admitting into the church a great number of sectaries. Sectaries! Sir: had it not been for sectaries, this cause had been tried at Rome. Thank God, it is tried here.

"Some gentlemen fear that, if we lay aside the Articles, and place the Scriptures in their stead, by throwing down all distinctions, we shall admit Papists, and together with them, their religion, too. But they forget that Papists are excluded by the oath of supremacy, and by the declaration against transubstantiation, against the invocation of the Virgin Mary, and other saints, and against the sacrifice of the Mass: And if any other test be needful, let them be made to acknowledge liberty of conscience, and the right of private judgment; let them abjure persecution—that were a truly Protestant test. But can any one seriously think that encouraging free inquiry and the study of the Scriptures will issue in the Romish religion? When I see a rivulet flow to the top of a high rock, and requiring a strong engine to force it back again, then shall I think that freedom of inquiry will be prejudicial to truth—then shall I think that liberty of judgment will be prejudicial to the Protestant religion—then shall I think that adhering to the Scriptures only will lead to Rome.

"Some gentlemen talk of raising barriers about the church of God, and protecting his honour. Language that is astonishing, that is shocking, that almost approaches to blasphemy. What! man—a poor, vile, contemptible reptile, talk of raising barriers about the church of God? He might as well talk of protecting Omnipotence, and raising barriers about his throne. Barriers about the church of God, sir? About that church, which, if there be any veracity in Scripture, shall continue forever, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail? If I may be allowed on so serious an occasion to recollect a fable, it puts me in mind of one which I have met with, of a stately, magnificent, impregnable castle, built on a rock, the basis of which was the centre of the earth, the top of it pierced the clouds, the thickness of the walls could not be measured by cubits. At the bottom of it a few moles were one day very busy in raising up a little quantity of earth, which when some mice saw—what are you doing, said they, to disturb the tranquility of the lord of this castle? We are not disturbing his tranquility, replied the moles: *all blind as you are*, you may see that we are only throwing up a rampart to protect his castle.

"The Church of God, sir, can protect itself. Truth needs not be afraid of not obtaining a victory on a fair trial. The lovers of truth will love all sincere inquirers after it, though they may differ from them in various religious sentiments. For it is to impartial and free inquiry only that error owes its ruin, and truth its success. Those who are penetrated with the benevolent spirit of the gospel, will not condemn as heretics, will not reject as unworthy of their affection, any who believe the Christian religion, who search and endeavour to understand the Scriptures, though they may be unable to comply with creeds and articles.

"Some gentlemen suppose that the Scriptures are not

plain enough to be a rule and centre of union to the Church. They must have articles and creeds to supply the defects. But if the things which are necessary to salvation are, as plainly revealed, there is no way of salvation revealed to the ball of mankind in all. Whatever is obscurely revealed will be always obscure notwithstanding our decisions. It can never be authoritatively determined by men. The only authority which can explain it, and make the explanation a test of faith, is the authority of God. As to what he has plainly revealed it needs no articles to ascertain its meaning. We should not then adopt views and measures which are contracted narrow. We should not set bars in the way of those who are willing to enter and labour in the church of God. When the disciples came to Christ and complained that there were some who cast out devils in his name, and said, we forbid them, because they followed not with us—What did our Saviour do? Did he send them tests and articles to be subscribed? Did he ask them whether they believed this, or that, or the other doctrine? Whether they were Athanasians or Arius, or Arminians? No. He delivered that comprehensive maxim—*He that is not against me is for me.* Go ye and say likewise."—*Christian Register.*

CREEDS.

The following excellent remarks are from Professor Stuart's Letters to Dr. Miller, recently published.

I am satisfied that the time is come, when it is necessary to examine well the doctrines which we believe and inculcate. The watchful opponents of our common faith have their eyes on all the steps of its advocates, and will demand a reason for all that they inculcate. But independently of this, the love of truth should be enough to stimulate us to the highest efforts, in order to know what we ought to believe and teach.

We ought highly to venerate the pious fathers in the Church, who have given us summaries of Christian doctrine, which they sincerely believed; but as the ministers of truth, we are obliged to call no man master upon earth. We have a heavenly master who has made his word the supreme and only rule of faith and practice. That word we must investigate, to know whether the doctrines of our Symbols are true; and not taking those doctrines as already established, bring the word of God to their test. Thus lived and acted Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and all that blessed host of worthies, who burst asunder the bonds of tradition and human authority; and we, their children in respect to professed principles, may venture to walk in their steps.

It is just as much our individual duty now, to bring every principle of the creed of the Protestant Churches to the test of the divine word, as it was the duty of the Reformers to bring that of the Catholics to the test of Scripture. This position is absolutely certain; unless we can prove that the formers of Protestant Symbols were inspired. If they were not, they may have erred in some things; and if so, it is important to us; if possible, to know in what they have erred. But how shall we, or how can we know this, unless their creeds are subjected, anew and repeatedly to the test of the Scriptures?

Will it be said, that the dwarfs of modern days only exhibit their pride and self conceit in attempting a comparison with those giants of yore? If it should, my answer would be; That dwarfs as we are in modern days, we

stand at least, upon the shoulders of those ancient giants, and must needs have a somewhat more extended horizon than they. To speak plainly, the whole word of God represents the path of the Church, like that of the just, to be as the light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The Kingdom of God always has been, and still is progressive. Glory is bursting in upon the Church, in various ways, intimately connected with making her light to shine still more brightly. Is she yet perfected in doctrine? Are all the treasures of the divine word yet unlocked? Are her fairest days past, and her brightest constellations set, to rise no more? The "thousand years" of glory yet to come, will supply a ready answer to those questions.

So long as we profess to be Protestants, and of course profess to believe that the Bible is the *sufficient and only* rule of faith and practice, so long, if we act consistently, we believe in the symbols of faith which we receive, *only* because we find them supported by the Scriptures. It is not only lawful then to put them to this test, but it is an imperious duty of every man to do it. There may be a show of modesty and humility in receiving what others have believed, without scrutiny; but in every case, where there is ability to investigate and bring to the Scripture test, a failure to do it must arise from undue regard to the authority of fallible men, or from mere inaction—from absolute sloth.

REMARKS.

The editor of the "Christian Secretary" on presenting the above extract from Professor Stewart's letters to Dr. Miller, to the readers of that paper, recommends the remarks therein as "Excellent."—As such, we most readily recommend them to the attention of our readers, believing them to be correct and worthy the perusal of all intelligent and inquiring minds. But we cannot help noticing how much the professions, and practices of men are at variance with each other; and endeavouring to show, that however excellent in theory or correct in principle, the above remarks are, the conduct of the Professor and many others who consider them "Excellent" is in direct violation of the same.

The Professor says he is "satisfied that the time is come, when it is necessary to examine well the doctrines which we believe and inculcate," again: "It is just as much our individual duty now, to bring every principle of the creed of the Protestant Churches to the test of the divine word, as it was the duty of the reformers to bring that of the Catholic to the test of Scripture." Supposing a member of a Presbyterian or Baptist Church encouraged by these "excellent remarks," should exercise the right, and perform this "individual duty," as did "Luther, Zuingli, Calvin, &c."—and should find, or be led to believe, by bringing Protestant CREEDS to the test of the divine word, that they were as repugnant to the Scripture as were the principles adopted by the Catholic Church; and feel it his duty to renounce the system of faith he had before embraced, would this man be left in quiet enjoyment of his faith, resulting from this investigation? We say not. Numerous are the instances of excommunication which are almost daily taking place, for no other cause than believing differently from the church of which they were members, although it was their wish to remain; and enjoy the privileges of church relationship. We would enquire whether the students in the Seminary at Andover, possess this privilege; and can freely perform this "individual duty;" and if in the exercise of their just right they should find cause to dissent from the CALVINISTIC CREED, will they continue to enjoy the benefits of an education in that institution, and be ushered into business as though they still believed those favorite doctrines taught at Andover? We think they would not. We would also ask the editor of the "Christian Secretary" whether, he is willing that the members of his church should exercise the privilege, and perform the duty pointed out by Professor Stewart, and, if on bringing the creed of his church to the test of the divine word, they should see

cause to dissent from them, would he still fellowship them as christians, and admit them to the communion table? We think he would not, especially if they should embrace the doctrine of Universal Salvation. This much we know, that many have been excommunicated both from Baptist and Presbyterian Churches, yea, from Methodists also, for exercising the privilege of thinking for themselves, the church creed notwithstanding.

It appears by the Professor, that it is "not only lawful, but the imperious" duty of every man to examine for himself, and although "There may be a show of modesty and humility in receiving what others have believed, without scrutiny," yet he thinks in every case "where there is ability to investigate and bring to the scripture test, a failure to do it must arise from undue regard to the authority of fallible men, or from mere inaction—from absolute sloth." But when men exercise this right, bringing into operation every power of the mind in the investigation, how are they treated if they see cause to dissent; what kind of treatment do Universalists meet with, from these very men who urge the duty; however honest and sincere they may be, in their belief of the goodness of God, and however worthily they may endeavor to walk, according to the christian profession. We should like to know what use it is for a man, to bring the principles of his creed to the test of the divine word, if, on finding it contrary to truth, he is not to be allowed the privilege of altering it, at least for himself. It is nonsense to urge men to the performance of a duty, which when performed, will avail him nothing, he may as well remain contented with his creed without the trouble of investigation.

The Professor gives us a reason why all, who have the ability should enter into this investigation of Creeds.—Which is, "the word of God represents the path of the church, like that of the just, to be as the light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. That "the kingdom of God has always been, and still is progressive." This is a good reason to be sure, for our faithfulness in the field of research, but have the religious world acted on this principle, or do they now act with reference to the progressive state of this kingdom? The answer is, they neither have, nor do they now give liberty for the mind to grow in the knowledge of the truth. To give more weight to his reason, the Professor asks the following questions, "Is she (the church) yet perfected in doctrine? Are all the treasures of the divine word yet unlocked?" From the answer which he gives, it is evident that he does not consider the church perfect in doctrine; nor all the treasures of the divine word yet unlocked. Now as the Professor will not allow the Universalist to know any thing of the divine word, although he may allow some knowledge of it to others. We would inquire in what particular point does he consider the doctrine of the church imperfect? Is it in regard to discipline, or to Grace? Does the doctrine fail in Salvation, or in damnation? We read in the scriptures of several kinds of doctrine, the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of men, and the doctrine of devils. The two last the Professor could not refer to, it is the doctrine of Christ which is the doctrine of the Church. The doctrine of Christ is called **GOOD DOCTRINE**, it brings salvation, it is the gospel of peace. If then this doctrine is imperfect as it does not fully reveal the salvation of God, and Professor Stewart looks with fond expectation for the progression of the church in the doctrine of grace, he must be informed it is only in universal benevolence he can find the perfection of the doctrine of Christ, and of this he seems sensible himself for having asked his questions he says "The 'thousand years' of glory yet to come, will supply a ready answer to these questions." It is necessary however to observe that the doctrine of Christ, cannot be imperfect, the imperfection, if any there is, must be in our understanding it. That the doctrine of the Protestant church is imperfect, that is, as to their understanding the doctrine of Christ, we are fully persuaded and this has left room for the church to advance in wisdom and knowledge. We also grant, with

pleasure, that the Church ever since the reformation has been progressing in the light of divine truth, which the continual altering and amending of their creeds and covenants, to bring them nearer to the bounds of reason and common sense as well as scripture fully demonstrates.

By the "thousand years of Glory," Mr. S. undoubtedly refers to the Millennium. We would ask him what will be the doctrine which will perfect the church in that day? Whether, any thing short of universal benevolence can produce that anticipated happy period? There cannot be much election, and reprobation, total depravity nor close communion in that period, no sectarian CREEDS, nor partial systems which cause men to treat each other in an unfriendly manner. No, the excellent sentiments contained in the Professors remarks will exist in practice as well as in theory, and will be imprinted on the heart as well as on paper.

COMMUNICATIONS.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

Mr. Editor.

I offer you, for publication, my religious experience—for I have been convicted and converted, or, in modern language, I have "experienced religion." When very young, strong impressions were made on my mind, by the Assembly of Divine's Catechism; and my father's explanation of it. Terror soon became the most prominent feeling. I was not more than four years old, when I first became frightened with the misery of that estate whereunto man fell, and was given to understand that I, and my fellow beings, were under the wrath and curse of a dreadful God; and exposed "to the pains of hell for ever." And it was scarcely sufficient to prevent my sinking into immediate despair, to be informed, that God had elected some to everlasting life: for I could not conceive how even these could be happy; surrounded and beset on every side by wretched objects, candidates for immortal woe! For a very long time I found little or no relief from these early impressions, but on the contrary, they became at times, still more poignant.

At about 9 or 10 years of age, being arraigned to be taught the Catechism, I was called upon to answer the question—"What doth every sin deserve?" I readily repeated the answer. My father inquired, if I knew the import? A trembling instantly seized me, and I could not answer. He demanded a reply. I stood mute in horror, and utterance was absolutely denied me. My father expostulated—How is it, my son, when I introduce any other subject, you are free to converse; but on the vast concern of your immortal soul, you refuse to speak? I really supposed at the time, that my refusal, as he termed it, was a sure token that my perdition was sealed; and I began to stagger under a weight of woe, too ponderous for me to sustain. And I have often thought, that if my father had continued his expostulations a little longer, I should have sunk down, and expired at his feet. But he soon saw my situation; and I read in his looks, a reprieve from immediate destruction.

Not many years after this, an intimacy took place between me and one of my dear sisters. We loved each other, and I can truly say, that fraternal affection was never more sincere, and rarely, if ever, more ardent. At the age of 18, she was carried off the stage of life by that lingering, living death, the consumption. When her case became desperate, the alarm and anxiety we mutually suffered, baffles all description. Being educated together, our religious impressions were similar. The dying hour arrived, "and every groan she heaved, was big with horror," to me, as well as to her; for every groan I responded, groan for groan.—At this awful crisis, my father used every exertion to inform her what she must do to escape endless misery. She listened as for the life of her precious soul. But she could not

understand what she must, or what she could do. He then turned his attention to the performance of a great duty—the reconciling himself to the endless perdition of his dear daughter. I saw his venerable frame totter under the weight that oppressed him—it was too much.

Bowed down to earth by this distressing event, combined with an unhesitating belief that but few of my fellow men could possibly escape an eternity of misery, I was on the brink of unconditional despair: when a ray, from the fountain of light, penetrated the gloom which enshrouded me; and a still small voice, whispered the consoling inquiry, Is this doctrine true? May it not possibly be an error? That moment, that precious moment, will never be forgotten, "while life, and thought, and being last." From that time, to enable me to examine this all important question, I began to attach some value to my being: for, heretofore, I had held it of no estimation, even worse than nothing. Indeed, I could not consider the human race in any other point of view, than as an infinite curse: one part, to be interminably miserable; and the other, to make the best of their case, must forever remain deep and hopeless mourners, for they must always remain without hope.

At the commencement of my reasonings and researches, on a work of such magnitude, I was resolved to proceed with the utmost circumspection, when to my utter astonishment, I soon found that reason had no concern with it.—That to get along at all with this doctrine, reason must be prostrated—that the Scripture must be set at variance with itself, and converted into a mass of contradictions—that every sympathetic and benevolent feeling of the heart must be suppressed, or eradicated, and that the glorious character of the incorruptible God, must be changed; not merely into an image made like unto corruptible man, but into that of a ferocious implacable tyrant, bent on tormenting his creatures; and that without cause, as all acknowledge that there has been made an ample propitiation for the sins of the whole world; and that it is God's prerogative, and his only, to apply this to the souls of men.

Seeing this dreadful doctrine by Scripture testimony and fair reasoning, fairly confuted, for a time, it seemed to me, it was enough. I felt resigned. Come what might, I thought I could cheerfully endure it. Disappointments and disasters of any description—come the loss of friends, near and dear—come death itself—come future misery to any limited extent—come any thing—come every thing, but an interminable hell. From the forebodings, with which from my infancy I had been haunted, to the happy prospects which now cheered my reviving spirits, was a radical change. It was indeed a saving change. In the varied, checkered scene of life, for nearly forty years, I have found it to be such.

It has saved me from despair, and a premature death. It has saved me from entertaining dishonorable thoughts of that God, whose essence is love; and it has enabled me to enjoy the comforts of life with cheerfulness; and to endure its trials with resignation. And of these last, I have had my share—only one of which, from the long catalogue, I will mention.

More than 30 years after the death of my sister, as already related, by the same fatal disease which carried her off, and nearly at the same age, I lost my only daughter. Had it been supposed that some severe chastisement was necessary to test the worth of the religion I had embraced, surely this stroke would have been deemed sufficient. And I can sincerely say, it has served to enable me to appreciate its inestimable value. In my daughter's near approach to the tomb, I could now approve of her unbounded trust, in the goodness and mercy of her God and Saviour. And even congratulate her on such an auspicious frame of mind at that solemn and interesting period of her existence. I saw no occasion of weakening her confidence in God, or intimating that he could possibly be less benevolent, or have a less compassionate design in his chastisements, than the father of her flesh, who never frowned upon her, but for her good. Her bitter dying groans, were the purchase, so to

express it, the cheap purchase of the glory which should shortly be revealed, where as she expressed it, she should "soon be soaring in the regions of bliss." In this trying scene, it was indeed consoling to know, that these momentary pangs would certainly work out for her, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Had I not have met with a saving change I must have felt the sad necessity of urging my daughter to do, or perform some mysterious, undefinable, inexplicable work, which no person has discernment enough to know what, or power to perform, if it could be known. And which, although it is wholly the work of God, I must have informed her she must do, or she must be damned. And thus, with this solemn mockery, have platted with thorns, her dying pillow! But, blessed be God, the Christian religion, rightly understood, inculcates no such "cruel mockings." On the contrary, it uniformly invites us to trust in the mercy of God, who gave his Son a "ransom for all, to be testified at due time." Having received this testimony, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulations." And I can heartily join with my Limitarian brethren, whenever they are disposed to "praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." Join, did I say? I can surely take the lead, and on a higher key, strike up my hallelujahs, and shout, in much more elevated strains, "Glory to God in the highest," for his impartial, unlimited, efficacious and eternal goodness.

Have they been in darkness and distress? I have suffered the horrors of doubt and darkness, and dismal forbodings. Do they now enjoy a degree of light and comfort? The light which shines in my enraptured view is far more refulgent. Can they faintly rejoice in a hesitating belief, that God will be partial to them? I cherish a belief, which leads to rejoicing, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Is it their expectation to meet in heaven, some part of our brethren of the human family? I have the transporting assurance of meeting them all; that not one will be lost, to damp the joy, and sadden the blessedness of that happy and divinely glorious place.

A UNIVERSALIST.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

Mr. Editor.—I have perused the communications of "Trenchard," which have appeared in your paper, with some degree of attention. Although there are many things contained in them, which are perfectly just and correct, still, I think there are others which are objectionable.

I agree with the writer that those have erred, who have represented the Scriptures as mysterious and enigmatical, but I will beg leave to add, that those also are in error who have represented them perfectly intelligible to the meanest capacity. Your correspondent appears to maintain, that the Scriptures are so simple and plain, that even a child can clearly understand them—that learning and science are needless, in the study of the Bible. These sentiments, I conceive, are erroneous; and I am really sorry to see your correspondent embrace the sentiments and arguments of the infidel, Tindal, that, if God has made a revelation, it must be so clear as to preclude a possibility of misunderstanding it. But "Trenchard" goes farther, and even suggests that it is unnecessary to preach and enforce the Christian duties! But is this becoming a writer who assumes the Christian name? What more could have been said by a professed enemy to our religion? I do not mean to insinuate, that "Trenchard" has espoused the cause of Infidelity, but I think he has laid down principles, which approximate towards it. At any rate, I conceive he has expressed himself incautiously.

The fact is, God has not revealed himself with such clearness as to preclude the necessity of research and investigation. There is not a principle in nature, and but few truths in Scripture, but what have been controverted; and to assert that a child can understand the whole revelation of God, is to assert what our daily experience will contradict. For man to murmur, because God has not revealed

himself in such a manner as to render any misconception impossible, is the same as to murmur, because they are finite, and not infinite beings. With a moment's reflection, "Trenchard" himself will discover that the Bible is not so plain, as he has repeatedly asserted. This he virtually acknowledges, in some of his communications. He tells us, that the meaning of the Bible is to be sought, like the meaning of any other book. But does he suppose that a child is capable of understanding any correct writer whatever? Where is a child capable of understanding his own "explications?" For myself, I confess I am unable.

At one time, he represents the Bible perfectly clear and intelligible; at another, that there is great danger of being led astray, unless we attend critically and carefully to the "subject, the spirit, and reason of the communication, the object aimed at, the person who writes, the persons to whom the communication is made, the circumstances under which it is made, as the time place, &c. and the known facts, and established principles." Now does "Trenchard" suppose that every person has the opportunity or ability to examine, and duly to weigh all these considerations? If not, they are liable to misapprehend the true meaning.—Again; at one breath he tells us that erudition and science are useless in understanding the Scriptures—and at the next, that we must, in addition to the whole volume of inspiration, carefully and critically examine Five Hundred Greek manuscripts, all differing from each other—that we must consult the ancient versions, peruse the Fathers, expunge from this manuscript, add to that, &c. &c. and even then the meaning will be only probable!! Now, that a child or unlearned person should be capable of all this critical research, is, to say the least, a little extraordinary.

But "Trenchard" tells us, that the only gospel requisition is, to believe in Christ. True; but to believe in Christ is to believe in the doctrines he taught; and their meaning is to be sought in the manner above described, that is, by plodding through hundreds of manuscripts in the original tongue, and reading all the writings of antiquity! Now most of the children, and indeed, some of the adults with whom I have been acquainted, are hardly capable of the above research. That study and investigation are necessary to a correct understanding of the scriptures, I firmly believe; and will venture to add that that person must lack a little modesty, who pretends to understand them correctly otherwise.

If "Trenchard" will clear up these difficulties to my mind, his favour will be gratefully acknowledged, and I hope he will be able to do it to "demonstration," as he fancies he has proved all his positions. It is not the positive style of the "Independent Whig," however, that is calculated to carry conviction to the reflecting mind. I will conclude by expressing my regret that a writer so apparently scholastic, should speak so diminitively of literary acquirements; that a person who dips so deeply into antiquity, should discourage the study of oriental learning; that a man whose delight is to understand the scriptures, should strive to limit that research by which this knowledge is to be acquired.

H——N.

REMARKS.

The preceding communication having been put into the hands of the writer of the "Explication of the Scriptures," he is under the necessity of making a few observations in reply. He would be happy to "clear up the difficulties in the mind" of H——n, but does not know how this can be done, being sensible that the difficulties in his mind, have no existence any where else. As the difficulties referred to, exist only in the mind of the writer, we know of no better or more suitable way to remove them, than for him to read, with attention, the communications of "Trenchard." We do not say, read again, for we are confident he has never read them, although he may have hastily glanced over the columns. We must necessarily believe this to be the case, unless we were to suppose, either that he could not understand these communications, or, that he had intentionally

misrepresented the views and sentiments of the writer; neither of which are we willing to believe of this gentleman. We say this, notwithstanding his admission that he is unable to understand our explications. That he has not understood them, we have no doubt, but that he was unable to do it, we can by no means admit. Whatever errors there may be, or however little merit, in the writings under consideration, the author thinks he may at least claim the credit of having expressed himself in a clear and intelligible manner, considering the abstruseness of many of the subjects which he has examined. It is with no small degree of astonishment therefore, that he finds himself so entirely misunderstood, by such a man as H——n, who has been himself a considerable contributor to this paper, and who as we are informed is a spiritual teacher. We do not believe, as we have already remarked he has intentionally misrepresented our meaning; yet we must be permitted to say, that we deem it extremely uncandid and ungenerous to seize upon an incidental remark, of a comparative and hyperbolical character, and in the first place to attempt to shew its absurdity; and then by comparing it with other positions maintained, attempt to prove the inconsistencies of the writer. And this is the more extraordinary, from the consideration that the same cavil was made some time since, from a different quarter, and an explanation made in reply, which we thought satisfactory to the most ordinary capacity, if not to the "capacity of a child." From the remarks of H——n one would suppose that "Trenchard" had seriously maintained and undertaken to "demonstrate" that the scriptures are so plain as to be adapted to the capacity of children. Such a position as this, would not only have been ridiculous in itself, but would have been entirely inconsistent with the whole course of the views and arguments of the writer; for this could only be supported, by giving to the scriptures a wonderful and supernatural character; whereas it has been the principal object of the writer to shew that such was not their character. We have maintained at all times, that revelation, consisting of a written communication, must be understood and construed in the same way and upon the same principles as all other writings are; that words must be understood in the same sense, and doubts and difficulties where they arise, removed and explained upon the same principles and from the same considerations. We have nowhere maintained as might be inferred from H——n's remarks that there was any thing peculiar in the character of the scriptures as a written communication, that adapted them to the capacities of children.

Neither was the incidental remark alluded to, applied to the scriptures. We did not say that revelation was so plain as to be adapted to the capacity of a child; we said that the essential obligations and requirements of the scriptures were so plain that they could be understood by the most ordinary capacity, even that of a child. It is only the general character, object and design of the scriptures that we have considered thus plain, and whilst we have insisted upon this, we have admitted that there were particular parts or passages which were obscure and uncertain, owing to their consisting of highly metaphorical language. But these in no way effect the general character and objects of revelation, or the essential obligations and duties of christianity. Does H——n think it is the same thing to understand the essential duties of christianity, as it is to be versed in oriental literature, or deeply learned in "patristical criticisms" to use the learned phrase of Professor Stewart. Neither have we used the "infidel argument of Tindal," (if such a one was ever used by him) "that revelation must necessarily be so plain as to exclude all possibility of its being misunderstood." Had we not been before, we should certainly, since seeing the "difficulties" of H——n be sensible how easy it is for the most plain and simple communication, to be misunderstood. We have maintained and we believe demonstrated, that revelation is and must necessarily be intelligible and adapted to the capacities of mankind, for whose benefit it was intended. This is no more

than to maintain, that the Deity has made use of proper means to effect an end. But H——n it seems, although he admits that the scriptures are not enigmatical, supposes there is not scarcely one truth contained therein which has not been disputed. We should like to have him point out what truths essential to christianity, have been or can be disputed, except by those who deny the authenticity of the scriptures. If he calls school divinity, christianity, his remark is certainly correct, and agrees precisely with the views we have disclosed.

But H——n supposes, that whilst we have at one time maintained that the scriptures were so plain they could not be misunderstood even by the capacity of a child, at another we have contended, that to understand them correctly, it was necessary to examine all the ancient manuscripts, to read all the ancient fathers, (a small undertaking) and to become as deeply versed in "patristical criticism" as Professor Stewart. How is it possible a man can read so carelessly. Instead of claiming that this kind of learning and research was necessary to a correct understanding of the scriptures, we alluded to it, and suggested some of the difficulties and uncertainties attending it, for the purpose of shewing that it could not be necessary, and that no essential duty or requirement of christianity, could depend upon nice points of verbal criticism; that all the scriptures contain, important for us to know, believe, or do, could not well be mistaken, and consequently that it was idle to trouble ourselves about nice and disputed questions of verbal criticism, which after all, must forever remain in doubt and uncertainty.

But it seems we have maintained that all science and learning, are useless and unnecessary for understanding the scriptures. From what we have said here, it is evident we do not consider that much learning is required to understand the christian duties; to become acquainted with all the scriptures require us to do or believe; but we have nowhere maintained that real learning, was useless and unnecessary upon any subject. But we have maintained that christianity cannot be made a science without corrupting and destroying it. If it is not a science as communicated, how can it become one? If it contains no system of dogmas, how can any be formed from it, without adding to it, or altering it? We have indeed contended, and as we humbly conceive demonstrated, that, that metaphysical jargon of learning called theology, or school divinity is useless and worse than useless; that it has been the principal source of the corruptions of christianity, of that almost impervious moral darkness which so long overshadowed the christian world, and the dreadful train of evils which flowed from it. If this is the learning, and science to which the gentleman alludes, he is not correct in saying that we have considered it useless, for we have regarded it as the source of incalculable calamities. Ignorance is preferable to error; especially to error of a practical and pernicious character. Whilst we deprecate false learning, we trust no one has a higher estimation of real science, which consists of a knowledge of things as they are. But true science, like true religion, can have no mystery nor magic in it.

But it seems we have insisted, that it was unnecessary to preach and enforce the Christian duties. Here, perhaps, after all, is, "the sum of our offending." H——n will excuse us, if we say, considering him as belonging to the profession, that we are inclined to believe, when reading some of the remarks of 'Trenchard,' he has applied to himself the language of the Scribes and Pharisees; "in saying that, thou reproachest us also." But he need not be concerned; we do not hold the clergy so cheap as he may imagine. It is only those who make merchandize of religion, and maintain only a form of Godliness, without the power or spirit thereof, that are the objects of our attack. We touched upon the subject of the clergy in our last number, and briefly gave our views upon it. But how this gentleman should have got the idea, that we have insisted it was unnecessary to preach and enforce the Christian du-

ties, we cannot conceive. We have more than once expressly stated, that it ought to be the principal, if not the only object of the clergy, to enforce the *Christian duties*, and throughout intimated the same, by shewing the absurdity and evil consequences of their directing their attention almost exclusively to speculative theology, and metaphysical disquisitions.

We do not suppose, we have succeeded in "clearing up the difficulties in the mind" of H——n; much less, that we have done this to a "demonstration;" but we can assure him, that what we have attempted to establish, either here or in "the Explications," has not been by a "positive style," as we know full well that *assertions*, however strong, are not *proof*, and that they are only resorted to, where truth and argument are wanting. TRENCHARD.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

THE MORALITY OF THE GOSPEL.

Whilst mankind for near two thousand years have been wrangling about matters of faith, and flogging and burning one another out of their errors, there has been little if any dispute concerning the moral precepts and maxims of Christianity. We have never heard of any one's being burned at the stake, when this Christian practice was in fashion, on account of his disbelief in, or non-observance of, the moral precepts of our Saviour; and even in modern times, it is rare indeed, that a person is excommunicated, on account of his disregarding the morality of the gospel. Indeed the moral doctrines of Christianity appear to have been practically expunged from the Scriptures. The principal use that seems to have been made of them, by the clergy, has been as an argument to substantiate the divine origin of the Scriptures. When authenticity of revelation is touched upon, the excellency of the morality taught by Christ, and its striking superiority over the moral doctrines of all human systems, is relied upon, and justly, too, as the strongest proof of the divine origin of the Christian system. But this has been nearly all the use that has been made of the moral doctrines of the gospel. Whilst they are considered as so important in supporting the authenticity of the system, it is extraordinary that they should have been regarded as of no consequence in themselves. If they do not form an essential; and indeed the principal part of the doctrines of Christ, is it not surprising how the morality of the gospel should be regarded as the principal evidence of the divine origin of the system? If the moral precepts are not the most important part of the doctrines of Christianity, it is an extraordinary circumstance that they should be considered as affording the strongest proof of the truth of revelation? If the dogmas or matters of faith, contained in the gospel, constitute the essential part of it, why are not they relied upon, as affording the strongest evidence of its divine origin? Ought not the leading and principal features of a system to afford the strongest evidence of the nature and origin of that system? The moral doctrines of Christianity, we are often told, afford conclusive evidence of their divine origin; but if the dogmas of the system constitute the primary and essential part of it, must not they afford a still stronger evidence of its divine character?—When proof of the authenticity of the Christian system is wanted, we are referred to its moral doctrines, but when we ask, what Christianity is, we are told, it consists of articles of faith, ordinances, &c. Thus the morals of the gospel are not taught as an essential part of Christianity, but are only used as evidence or proof of its divine origin; yet this proof, too, is wholly founded upon the idea, that the moral doctrines taught by Christ, are so much more pure and perfect, than any which had previously been known, that they could only have proceeded from a divine source.

If the moral doctrines of the Christian system bear the strongest marks of the divine origin of that system, is not this conclusive evidence that they constitute the primary and essential part of it? All agree that the moral doctrines inculcated by the Founder of the Christian religion, are sublime and excellent; and all agree essentially as to what

these doctrines are. They are involved in no mystery or obscurity; they require not the aid of Councils or Synods, or creeds, or articles of faith, or formulas, or even ecclesiastical seminaries. The doctrine of benevolence; that we do good to one another, that we reward evil with good; love mercy and practice justice; that instead of harbouring resentment, we forgive our enemies, and pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us, are principles easily understood, and about which there has never been any serious controversy. "If there is any other commandment, it is comprehended in this saying, namely thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself." There can be no dispute concerning these doctrines, either as to what they are, or, as to the excellency of them. All can understand them, and all will admit that they are good, practical and excellent; that they are calculated to produce peace and happiness; to make men better neighbors; better citizens; to make them more tranquil, resigned, virtuous, and contented. But according to the common notions, a person may believe in, and strictly observe and practice, the 'divine morality' of the gospel, and possess and enjoy all the fruits thereof, and not be a Christian; yet this morality too, is considered by the same men as the strongest evidence of the divine nature of Christianity. What can be more preposterous! What doctrines did Christ teach, except moral doctrines? Did he inculcate a system of faith? Did he prescribe and enjoin the observance of ceremonies of worship? Did he institute religious ordinances, and establish the formula of the church; or did he teach the observance of days, fastings, and the external forms of religion? Instead of teaching these things, as religion, they are what he uniformly condemned. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tythes of mint and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: ye devour widow's houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. It was a religion of ceremonies, without the spirit of virtue, piety, or benevolence; a mere form of godliness, without the power thereof, which prevailed among the Jews, and which he uniformly condemned and undertook to reform. He taught a religion of love, benevolence, and charity; of simplicity, sincerity and truth; a religion, the basis of which consisted in *doing good*. He proclaimed no articles of faith, no rites, no forms, nor ceremonies, no ordinances; but taught mankind that to love one another, and do good to their fellow creatures, was fulfilling the law and the prophets; that this was the only true religion. Yet the pretended followers of Christ teach, that love, charity, humanity, justice, truth, sincerity, are not religion; that these, and all the other Christian virtues are of no avail; and indeed they are condemned as not only unavailing, but as dangerous, being stigmatized as *self-righteousness*. As long as such sentiments as these prevail, and are taught by spiritual guides, it is in vain for them to say, that the morality of the gospel forms any part of their religion. It is expressly excluded from it; for if the observance and practice of the moral doctrines of Christ are represented as constituting no merit, as in no way available as it respects the salvation of mankind, they are entirely excluded from the system; but to maintain that morality is an *obstacle* to salvation, is going a step farther, and directly discourages the moral virtues. The advocates of these sentiments are not to get off, by saying, they admit morality is a good thing, and that it promotes our happiness in this life. By placing it on this principle, they cannot claim to strengthen the cause of morality, and make it any part of their religion.

Was it ever doubted that virtue and morality are necessary and useful in this life? Did not all the heathen philosophers teach this? And Plato and many of them went farther and extended the influence of virtue to futurity. Are not the laws of all civilized nations founded on this principle? No society could exist where they were not. Even among savages this principle is recognised; although their virtues are of a more barbarous kind. Then ortho

doxy you do admit that virtue and morality are useful in this life. Surely the world must be under great obligations to your votaries as the champions of morality! Yet, men maintaining these sentiments, not only think that they are christians themselves, but deny this title to those who believe and profess to practice the moral doctrines of the gospel; yes, and even have the presumption to talk about the licentiousness of such doctrines.

RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

SATURDAY, Nov. 16, 1822.

We have received a letter from a friend, enclosing strictures, on a Sermon delivered by the Rev. Hosea Ballou of Boston; from 2 Thess. 1—7, 8, 9—signed "Senex." We do not wish to interfere with the right and privilege of a brother, to defend his own sentiments made public through the press, especially, when that vindication can be made with more ability, than we possess. If "SENEX" is moved by honorable and christian feelings, and is a real lover of truth; while feeling it his duty to expose error, he would also feel it to be his duty to send his strictures, or remarks, to the author of the erroneous work he examines, that he may have the opportunity of defending himself, or of being convinced of his error.

"Senex" must be sensible, there is nothing like fairness in one man reviewing the works of another, at a distance from him, for the purpose of refuting them, and making those remarks public, without sending them to the author whose works he reviews. By this, "cunning craftiness" the writings of any man may be refuted, however true, with those who are willing to have it so, by misrepresentation; and pass "unanswered and unanswerable" when the distance of the author is such, as to prevent his hearing any thing of these strictures on his writings. It is our opinion that "Senex" has not done in this case as he would wish others to do by him, especially if he has given publicity to his remarks on Mr. B's sermon. He must know it is ungenerous to attack another's sentiments, without giving him an opportunity of vindicating himself, and we cannot help believing, had "Senex" been governed by a sincere love for the truth, and felt himself able to support his remarks on the errors, and inconsistencies he thinks he finds in Mr. B's sermon, he would have addressed his remarks to him, being as willing Mr. B. should see them, as any one else.

We are persuaded the remarks of "Senex" have been made public, either in a printed, or, in a manuscript form. Had our friend informed us which, we should have sent them to Mr. B. for his examination. As we are requested to notice the observations of "Senex" we will comply with the wishes of our readers in his vicinity, so far as relates to his first remarks, on Mr. B's observations, on the common opinions of the day. We wish our friend to inform us in what manner "Senex" has made his remarks public, and whether the manuscript sent, is a literal and true copy, from his writings. On learning this, we shall know better how to proceed, and should we find it necessary, shall make further strictures in our succeeding numbers.

We are sensible that the remarks of Universalists similar to those made by Mr. B. in his sermon, on the last, or general judgment; connected with the common opinion, that when a man dies, he passes either into heaven or hell, according to the character he has formed in this life, has opened the eyes of many even of the clergy, to the absurdity of such sentiments, and has produced no little difficulty among the determined advocates of a future general judgment, how to maintain their favorite theory. The idea that a man when he dies, goes immediately to a state of happiness or misery; and after remaining in one or the other situation, perhaps, for several thousand years, to be then called forth to pass a formal judgment or trial to determine whether he is worthy to be in that situation, in which, he has passed a long period of time, is so inconsistent with reason and

common sense, that the moment it is examined, it is found impossible to defend the position by any rational argument, or to support it by scripture. The absurdity, has induced some to adopt the opinion of Dr. Priestly, that between death and the resurrection, man is placed in a state of negation, or sleep, being unconscious of existence, that in the morning of the resurrection man will wake up as from a sound sleep, and as to intervening time, whether it is one year, or ten thousand, it will be all as one to him, being unconscious of the time that has passed.

Others conceive of an intermediate state, between death and the resurrection, in which men will possess a consciousness of existence, but will be neither perfectly happy, nor miserable. They will exist in some state which is neither heaven, nor hell; but somewhere between.

"Senex" who, we are informed, is an Episcopal clergyman, embraces the latter opinion, for he thus replies to Mr. B. "The reader is hereby informed, that, with regard to the intermediate state between death and the judgment, it was the belief of the ancient Jews, and primitive christians, that at the departure of the soul from the body, it went to a secret invisible place provided by God for its residence, there to remain till the general judgment; the wicked and impenitent, in *uneasiness, remorse and despair*, and the good, in *peace and refreshment* with the ASSURED HOPES of God's favor and a FULL acquittal at the final retribution; the one in a state of imperfect misery, and the other in a state of imperfect happiness, and so to continue to the reunion of soul and body at the general resurrection, then to be judged as their conduct had been when united together in this state of trial.—And this is the belief of the Episcopal Church in general."

If by "primitive christians" "Senex" means the Romish Church, we readily grant such was their opinion, they had their intermediate state, their PURGATORY, from which souls might be delivered by the prayers of the church if the friends of the deceased had money enough to purchase them. That it is the opinion of the Episcopal Church, in general, is altogether probable, as that church has been very fond of imitating the Romish Church in many things. In ceremony, in ostentatious show and parade, and the keeping of feast days, and fast days, saints days, and many others, enumerated in the church calendar. The Episcopal Church also claims a regular succession of ordination from the apostles, altho' for twelve centuries passing through the polluted hands of the Church of Rome; and it is not to be wondered that she should also claim fellowship in the belief of an intermediate state. That this was not the belief of the apostles, especially of St. Paul is very evident, for he says, Phil. 1, 23, 24. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." If Paul understood himself when he expressed this desire which he had to depart, "Senex" will have to prove one, of two things in order to support his hypothesis. Either that Paul was exempted from this intermediate state, and had the full assurance given him, that he should immediately enter into celestial glory with Christ. Or, that Christ is an inhabitant of that intermediate state, for he says, "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ," he, therefore, must have believed, that as soon as he departed this life, he should go where Christ was, and be with him, which he considered far better than to remain here.

Should we for the sake of argument, grant "Senex" his opinion, he would still fail of removing the objections presented by Mr. Ballou. According to his opinion when the good man dies, he enters into a state of "peace and refreshment, with the assured hopes of God's favor, and a final acquittal at the day of retribution." We ask "Senex" if the fate of this man is not absolutely fixed by the righteous judgment or determination of his judge, how he is to obtain the "ASSURED hopes of God's favor, and a FULL acquittal at the day of retribution?" According to "Senex" the final state of man is fixed at death; and he enters into this intermediate state to enjoy the "ASSURED hopes of God's fa-

vor," or to experience the gnawings of "remorse and despair," as his character was in this life. It is not believed that man can perform any action in that state, which will, or can alter his future destiny. What use, then, this general judgment? Why bring forth to trial, those who for several thousand years have enjoyed "peace and refreshment, the assured hopes of God's favor, and a full acquittal"? Does "Senex" believe it is possible for one of these to be condemned? On the other hand why bring up that man to judgment, who has passed a period, in all the agony of "remorse and despair"? Does "Senex" think it possible he may be acquitted? No, this he will not pretend. Then how does he remove Mr. B's. objections.

"Senex" seems to predicate the propriety of this judgment on the idea that the disembodied spirit does not, or cannot enjoy that perfect happiness, or experience that complete misery, which it will by a reunion of soul and body. If the reunion of soul and body could produce any moral change, so as to give man any possible chance in the day of retribution, there might be some propriety in the opinion; but we must keep in mind, the die is cast, man's fate is fixed and determined, and this union can produce no change in his future destiny. The union is only to add to his happiness, or his misery. Then why not unite the soul and body without the solemn forms of a trial or judgment, when all things were decided ages before. In this idea of reunion of the spirit with this animal system. "Senex" unfortunately again differs from Saint Paul, he says 2 Cor. 5, 1, 2, "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,—For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven."

It will be remembered, that "Senex" has given such and such things as his opinion, and the opinion of the Episcopal Church in general. He has not attempted to prove this opinion by scripture. This was his duty. The day is past in which men take the traditions or opinions of others for gospel truths. It is expected men will support their opinions, by argument drawn from, and demonstrated by the divine word.

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

We present the first number of the second volume of the *Religious Inquirer*, in a new dress. Not receiving the type in season, has caused the delay of one week. It is wished that those holding *Subscription Papers*, would have the goodness to return the names of any new Subscribers they may have on their list. It is not necessary to return the *Prospectus*, this may be retained, and the names returned by letter. It is believed that our Subscribers will cheerfully comply with the terms of the Paper, which is One Dollar, payable in advance—on being informed, that in order to furnish them with *one third more matter*, and to present the paper in a style worthy their attention, the Publishers have been at much expence, in the purchase of a new fount of type. As our Subscribers are scattered over almost every State in the Union, they will readily discover the necessity of punctuality. It would be next to impossible to collect such small sums, at a distance of from one, to five, or seven hundred miles. The Publishers, therefore, think proper to notify the Subscribers for this paper, that in all cases beyond the limits of the county of Hartford, where the Subscribers do not pay for the FIRST VOLUME, previous to the publishing of the THIRD Number of the SECOND, their paper will be discontinued, except in such places, where they have Agents to attend to the collection, and are responsible for the money.

BIGOTRY.

The author of the "Emerald Isle," in a speech at a meeting of the Catholics of Dublin, thus personifies *Bigotry*:
 "She has no head, and cannot think—no heart, and cannot feel!—When she moves, it is in wrath—when she pau-

ses, it is amid ruin—her prayers are curses—her God is a Demon—her communion is death—her vengeance is eternity!—her Decalogue is written in the blood of her victims—and, if she stops for a moment in her infernal flight, it is upon some kindred rock, to whet her vulture sang for keener rapine, and replume her wing for a more sanguinary desolation!"

This prosopopeia will not suffer in a comparison with *Milton's Sin and Death*, or *Curran's Informer*.

CHARITY.

DAUGHTERS of pity, tune the lay;

To moturners joy belongs;

While he that wipes all tears away

Accepts our thankful songs.

No altars smoke, no off'rings bleed,

No guiltless lives expire;

To help a brother in his need

Is all our rites require.

Our off'ring is a willing mind

To comfort the distrest;

In others' good our own to find,

In others' blessings blest.

Go to the pillow of disease,

Where night gives no repose,

And on the cheek where sickness preys,

Bid health to plant a rose.

Go where the friendless stranger lies,

To perish in his doom;

Snatch from the grave his closing eyes,

And bring his blessing home.

Thus, what our heavenly Father gave,

Shall we as freely give;

Thus copy him who liv'd to save,

And died that we might live. HAMPSON.

A FACT.

A clergyman travelling a road that led from a noted tavern, overtook a man on horseback, who had treated himself so kindly with *good stuff*, that his body was subject to a constant vibration from side to side;—for the sake of good company he made exertion to keep his horse along side of the clergyman's, to the great hazard of loosing his seat on the saddle. "Friend," said the clergyman "whoever you be, you seem to be very happy." "I hope" said the man, "I shall be happy, in the next world; I know you very well though you are unacquainted with me.—You are the very man, who converted me." "Very possible" said the clergyman, "and it looks like some of my bungling work, which I shall be obliged to do over again."

Christian Register.

DIED.

In Providence, R. I. Mr. SAMUEL HILL, in the 84th year of his age. It is but justice to the memory of the deceased to say, that in his character were united those virtues which are an ornament to the christian name. For about forty years of his protracted life, he was a firm believer in the divine goodness, in the creation, preservation, and the final redemption from sin and misery, of all the erring children of Adam; and his life was a practical comment on the belief, for it breathed *love and good will to all*. After giving directions respecting his funeral, he, in the triumph of faith, commended his soul to the hands of its Maker. Consolatory to his only child and numerous friends (for he had no enemies) is the reflection, that the unbounded mercy of God gave him delight in the dying hour, and brightened the beam of his setting sun.—*Universalist Magazine.*

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 FOR THE PROPRIETORS.

A FEW RODS SOUTH OF THE LITTLE BRIDGE.

AT ONE DOLLAR PER ANNUM—PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.